

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-03

TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-03 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01

STR-08 CEA-02 DRC-01 /156 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8072

S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 3967

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CU, HO

SUBJECT: FONMIN BATRES' COMMENTS ON CUBA

1.LAST NIGHT (SEPTEMBER 19TH) I RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM FONMIN BATRES APPARENTLY RESULTING FROM A CONVERSATION WHICH I HAD WITH DUPUTY FONMIN PINEDA OVER INFORMATION WE HAD THAT CUBAN "COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVE" WAS IN COUNTRY AND HAD CONTACTED COHDEFOR OFFICIALS. I EXPRESSED TO FONMIN BATRES OUR CONTINUED CONCERN OVER UNILIATERAL COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN RIO TREATY SIGNATORIES AND GOVERNMENT OF CUBA. BATRES TOOK A VERY DEFENSIVE STANCE INDICATING THAT CUBAN REPRESENTATIVES IS HERE MERELY ON AN EXPLORATORY MISSION AND THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN INVITED BY GOH DIRECTLY. HE SAID REQUEST FOR VISA HAD COME FROM GOH EMBASSY CM MEXICO AND THAT VISA HAD BEEN APPROVED MERELY TO PROVIDE HONDURAS WITH CONTINUED CONTACT WITH POSSIBLE CLIENT IN THE EVENT OF FUTURE LIFTING OF CUBAN SANCTIONS. BATRES POINTED OUT THAT IT SEEMED TO GOH THAT LIFTING OF SANCTIONS WAS NOW A FOREGONE CONCLUSION AND THEY WANTED TO MAINTAIN THIS POSSIBILITY OF COMMERCIAL INTERCHANGE,

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PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF "GRAVE ECONOMIC SITUATION NOW

FACING GOH".

2. I STATED MY CONCERN TO FONMIN BATRES RECALLING PARTICULARLY THE FLAP RESULTING FROM THE 1973 CUBAN SUGAR DEAL. HE AGREED THAT GOH HAD COME UNDER CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM FROM PRIVATE SECTOR AND RIGHTIST GROUPS, BUT AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO JUSTIFY MEASURE AS BEING PURELY ECONOMIC AND IN THE "BEST NATIONAL INTERESTS". BATRES THEN WENT ON TO OFFER GRATITUOUSLY THE COMMENT THAT GOH NOW FELT COMPELLED BY HURRICANE FIFI TO KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN WITH REGARD TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL TRADE MISSIONS WITH "ANY AVAILABLE CREDIT". I EXPRESSED TO HIM OUR CONCERN AGAIN AND REMINDED HIM THAT ALL NATIONS TEND TO FACE ECONOMIC UPS AND DOWNS AND THAT WE WOULD NOT FEEL THAT SUCH A SITUATION SHOULD BE A SIGNAL FOR A DEPARTURE FM

ESTABLISHED TREATIES AND COVENANTS. I REMINDED HIM OF OUR CONTINUED RESPECT FOR HONDURAS AS A NATION WHICH CONSISTENTLY HAS STOOD BY ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTER-AMERICAN TREATIES. BATRES COUNTERED THAT THIS NATURALLY A CONTINUED SOURCE OF PRIDE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONDURAS BUT STRESSED AGAIN THAT HE HOPED THE GOH WOULD NOT FIND ITSELF FACED BY "ECONOMIC REALITIES" WHICH WOULD TRANSCEND ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

3. COMMENT: BATRES SEEMED AT FIRST TO BE A BIT SHEEPISH ABOUT THE INFORMATION WITH WHICH I SEEMED TO BE CONFRONTING HIM. HE LATER TENDED TO TURN TO AN APOLOGETIC STANCE. HOWEVER, I FEEL I AM READING INTO HIS OVERALL POSITION A FOREWARNING THAT IF HONDURAS' ECONOMIC POSITION DOES NOT IMPROVE SOON, THE GOH MAY FIND IT NECESSARY TO TURN TO CUBA WHICH AT THE MOMENT SEEMS TO BE A READY CUSTOMER FOR THE REPORTEDLY LARGE QUANTITIES OF UNSOLD HONDURAN LUMBER. SANCHEZ

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